

ARKANSAS' PATHWAY TO USEFUL  
LIVING

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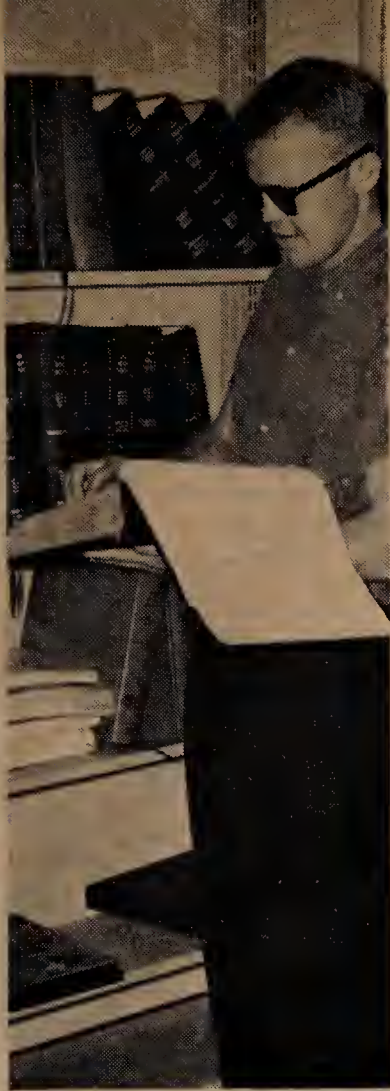
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HOUSE FOR THE BLIND**





# ARKANSAS'



Here is where the blind can fight their way back from the shock of disability and the loss of confidence

by JOHN READ KAREL

**I**F YOU HAPPEN to be walking on tree-shaded Fair Park Boulevard in Little Rock, Arkansas, some afternoon, and see a blind man tapping his way along the sidewalk, don't feel sorry for him.

He is taking his first proud steps along the pathway to useful living.

He is a trainee at the Southwest Rehabilitation Center for the Blind, and will soon be one of the almost 1,000 graduates who have found new hope and new lives since this unusual Lions-sponsored project was founded only 17 years ago.

The story of this college of courage goes back farther than 17 years; back to 1939, when the Lions of Arkansas organized the Arkansas Enterprises for the Blind. In those pioneer days of blind rehabilitation, the state's Vocational

Rehabilitation Service and Welfare Department had inaugurated a vending stand program, to set up news, candy and cigar stands in office buildings and put blind men in charge.

Neither of the state agencies had funds to start the program. The Arkansas Lions organized Enterprises for the Blind, then contributed \$2,500 to get the vending stand program started. From that modest investment has grown a



*Above: Roy Kumpe, now executive director of AEB, prompted development of the adjustment training program. Right: Use of the Braille switchboard is one of many skills taught trainees at the Center.*



## New Frontiers

"... The times are too grave, the challenge too urgent, the stakes too high to permit the customary passions of political debate. We are not here to curse the darkness, but to light the candle that can guide us through that darkness to a safe and sane future . . . The problems are not all solved and the battles are not all won—and we stand today on the edge of a new frontier . . ."

Remember those words? Words spoken by a great man in the creation of modern American history.

I believe that we can equally say that we of the Cadillac Lions club are at a new frontier. We are in possession of opportunities that have never before been given to the club. There will be problems to face and battles to win.

With a united sacrifice of time and effort we can take on the opportunities and challenges of the weeks to come with new spirit. A spirit driven by the unselfish desire to help our community to stand prominent as truly "A City of Quality." This same spirit can help the blind to see and the crippled to walk.

Lionism requires this spirit to be ever present and this same requirement was made of us when we first became Lions. Are we to allow ourselves to fall away from this commitment or do we don our lapel buttons and fulfill our obligations?

Make your decision known by your attendance. New frontiers cannot be had if we are to be divided.

—Cadillac, Mich. club bulletin.

## Prayer for a Club

Lord, help me build a Lions club that will be strong enough to know when it is weak, men brave enough to face themselves when they are afraid; a Lions club that will be proud and unbending in honest defeat, and humble in its victories.

Help me build a club whose wishbone will not be where its backbone should be; a club whose heart will be clear and whose goal will be high; Lions who will master themselves before they seek to master other men.

Lions who will learn to laugh, yet never forget how to weep; Lions who will reach into the future, yet never forget the past.

Then may I ask that I be granted enough of a sense of humor so that I may always be serious, yet never take myself too seriously. Give me humility, so that I may always remember the simplicity of true greatness, the open mind of true wisdom, the meekness of true strength so that at the end of my term I can say with honesty that I have not served Thee and this Lions club in vain.

—Tony Bandoni, Albuquerque (Rio Grande), N.M. club.



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*AEB sights: 1. Marble lion at the front of the Center's grounds was a Lion gift and symbolizes Lions participation. 2-4. The blind learn such useful crafts as lamp manufacture, weaving and woodworking, here observed by Past Int. Dir. Lytle C. Fowler and Third Int. Vice-Pres. Edward M. Lindsey.*

network of 61 stands which have paid more than a million dollars in wages to blind operators. The state Rehabilitation Service supervises the program, but frequently the Lions lend money to operators who want to go into business for themselves.

Working with this vending stand program, the staff of AEB discovered that many blind people, otherwise employable, were not physically or psychologically adjusted to hold down a job. Roy Kumpe, a young lawyer with partial sight who was in charge of the program, put it in these words: "You can't take a man who has been sitting in a rocking chair for years, or especially one who has just had the shock of losing his sight, and say here is a job—go to work. If such people are to take a job, they must first regain confidence in themselves."

Kumpe talked about adjustment training to his fellow Lions. In 1945 the Little Rock Lions club Sight Conservation Committee recommended that a building be rented, equipped and staffed as a training school to prepare the blind for independent living as wage earners.

The Little Rock Lions brought the matter before the 1946 state convention with a resolution to make the project statewide. With the convention's blessing, the Little Rock members came home and raised \$10,000. The original property on Fair Park Boulevard, with a two-story home on it, was leased, equipped and turned over to Arkansas Enterprises for the Blind on March 1, 1947.

By 1950 the adjustment training program was well established and the Lions raised \$35,000 to purchase the block-square property outright. In 1952 Barry Hall, a temporary concrete block and frame building, was erected and named after Edward G. Barry, first chairman of the Arkansas Lions Committee for Sight Conservation and later President of AEB and of Lions International. The new building, with the old one, increased the Center's capacity to 20 trainees.

By 1959, with the facilities bursting at the seams, it was decided to build a permanent "campus" for the Center. In a statewide campaign, the Lions of Arkansas raised \$250,000, which was matched two-



for-one by federal funds under the Hill-Burton Act. Four attractive two-story brick buildings were constructed; an administration building, a woman's dormitory, a training and therapy building and a men's dormitory.

On September 8, 1963 the completed Rehabilitation Center for the Blind, with a capacity of 50 trainees in residence, was dedicated. Edward G. Barry, now a Past President of Lions International, was master of ceremonies; on the speaking program were Governor Orval E. Faubus of Arkansas, Congressman Wilbur Mills, Third Vice-Pres. Edward M. Lindsey of Lions International, and Louis Rives, director of federal services for the blind.

Since its founding in 1947, the Lions of Arkansas have contributed more than \$1,000,000 to the construction and support of the Center. The statewide Lions Sight Conservation Committee raises approximately one-fourth of the Center's operating budget each year; the remainder comes from tuition fees, payments for lodging and contributions by the rehabilitation services of the states served by the Center.

Today the Southwest Rehabilitation Center for the Blind is a modern, self-contained school in which blind people are taught to be self-confident and self-sufficient. Its service and influence have spread beyond the borders of Arkansas; among its 1,000 graduates are people from 26 states and four foreign countries. In 1963, six out-of-state directors were elected to the Board of Arkansas Enterprises for the Blind—Past Int. Pres. Finis E. Davis of Louisville, Kentucky, who was President of the Little Rock club when the Center was founded; Third Vice-Pres. Edward M. Lindsey of Lawrenceburg, Tennessee; Int. Dir. Robert McCullough of Tulsa, Oklahoma; Int. Dir. Russell M. Nixon of St. Louis, Missouri, and Past Int. Dirs. Lytle C. Fowler of Oxford, Mississippi and Alcee F. Maxfield of Lake Charles, Louisiana.

In 1963, too, the Board—under

the presidency of Byrl A. Byles of Little Rock—voted to expand the Center's international service still further by granting scholarships to blind people in other countries in cooperation with Lions clubs in those countries.

So much for the physical and administrative set-up of the Rehabilitation Center. How does it operate? What does it do for the blind? How does it get people out of their rocking chairs and shock of blindness and into the world of useful living?

To be accepted for training, the blind person must have the capacity to do things which lack of vision, insecurity and non-confidence have hampered him from doing. The Center simply guides and trains him toward purposeful and creative living. Trainees can be housewives, students, senior citizens; they have ranged in age from 16 to 72. Of the 1,000 already graduated, 35 percent went on to college, 45 percent obtained steady employment and 20 percent became homemakers.

The work of the Center is directed to helping the trainee recapture the spark of incentive which will pull him through to a useful future. There is no such thing as blind people in general; there is only the individual trainee with his own set of drives, frustrations, dreams and fears, which are dealt with as his alone.

To accomplish that purpose, the Center has recruited an exceptional staff of teachers. At its head as Executive Director is Roy Kumpe—the man who sparked the project almost 20 years ago and has dedicated his life to its fulfillment. He knows about blindness because, though he has partial sight, it is so limited that he is legally blind. Working with him are men like Oliver Burke, director of mobility, whose impressive title belies the hundreds of miles he has walked at the side of trainees, teaching them to use a white cane . . . or Lyle Thume, the scholarly psychologist, totally blind, who speaks from experience when a trainee says "I can't" and Thume insists

that he can. Most often they do

"This is a good deal like a coaching job," says Burke. "You encourage them, you try to inspire them sometimes you talk a little rough—but the main thing is to keep them practicing, practicing until they master every step. We are always up against fear and lack of confidence. Once we overcome those the rest is easy."

Easy for some, difficult for others. Trainees stay from two to six months, depending upon individual needs. Only a few are enrolled at a time, so that individual attention can be given. The course includes psychological evaluation and counseling; training in grooming, etiquette and health care; home management; instruction in typing, telephone dialing, Braille and speech; crafts, shop technique and the use of power tools and appliances. It isn't all work; the recreation program includes bowling, swimming and dancing, field trips, parties, talent shows and participation in Lions club and television programs.

Appropriately, the Center's own monthly newspaper, edited by Sam Murphy, is called "New Life."

White-haired Roy Kumpe, who has been working with the blind for 25 years, is accustomed to the rehabilitation miracles worked at the Center. Recently a woman trainee, completing her three-month stay at the Little Rock campus, stopped at his office to say goodbye.

"When I came here I felt like a lump," she said. "People either hovered over me or talked around me; to them I wasn't really a person. Now I feel important again. I can be somebody. The big difference, Mr. Kumpe, is that for the first time in years, I'm useful."

"We merely show them what they can do, and they do it," says Roy. "We can't help but be proud of them. They are the ones with the real courage and determination."

He could say the same about the Lions of Arkansas, who have guided the footsteps of the blind along the pathway to useful living.

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